

January 26, 2016

To Senate Health & Social Services Committee Members:

This letter is to support House Bill 200/Senate Bill 112. The Arctic Slope Native Association (ASNA) believes this bill will have positive and lasting impacts for Alaska Native children and families.

The bill removes barriers for Alaska Native families who want to adopt those connected to them by family or tribal membership by making the process more realistic and understandable.

Well over 40% of Alaska Native children who are adopted annually are adopted by non-Native, non-family members. It is our hope that this bill will increase the number of Alaska Native children to reach permanency with their family, culture and traditions.

Congress enacted the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) in 1978 due to the alarming numbers of Indian children being removed from their homes by state and private welfare agencies and placed in non-Indian foster and adoptive homes never to be returned to their families, culture, or communities. By tribal resolution, ASNA is the ICWA representative for the Arctic Slope communities of Atqasuk, Kaktovik, Nuiqsut and Wainwright. The services we provide include representing Tribal children in court cases, handling customary adoptions and working with families, courts, and the state to place children with relatives. This bill will strengthen the services we provide and allow maximum benefit for the people of the North Slope.

Alaska Native families who live in rural Alaska may not speak English fluently or they may have difficulties obtaining legal counsel. This bill seeks to eliminate complicated procedural barriers in the adoption process for children in custody so that Alaska Native families can be considered for adoption through the Child in Need of Aid (CINA) proceedings instead of through an entirely different proceedings held in Probate Court. Families will be able to assert their desire to adopt a child through the Child In Need of Aid proceedings and would be considered for adoption after the permanency goal changes to adoption.

Thank you for supporting keeping Alaskan's children with their families and in their own home communities.

Sincerely,



Angela Cox
Vice President of Administration
Arctic Slope Native Association